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# TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE....

A Column on Consumer Issues  
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## **BANK EXAMINER SCAM**

Unfortunately, old scams never really seem to go away! These scams come back over and over again, each time with a slightly new twist to smooth-talk their victims out of their hard-earned savings. It is important to learn the telltale signs of a con, gimmick or come-on so you'll recognize the scam and walk away or simply just hang up the phone.

One of those old standby scams is the bank examiner scam - one of the oldest and most common scams around. Like most scams, it preys upon the generosity, kindness and trusting nature of the victim. Here's how it works:

In the bank examiner scheme, con artists pose as FBI agents, bank examiners, police officers, detectives or bank officials. Generally, the con artist draws the victim into the scam by contacting the victim, usually by phone, claiming to be an officer of the bank at which the victim has an account. The caller claims that due to a computer malfunction or other problem, the bank needs to verify certain information. During the conversation, the caller tries to obtain needed information about the victim's account balance, recent account activity, etc. The caller will also try to determine if the victim lives alone. If the phony bank officer gets the needed information they will thank the victim, and tell the victim they will call back if there are any problems.

After a short time, the phony bank officer will call the victim again asking for assistance in catching a dishonest teller they suspect of stealing from customer's accounts, including the victim's account. Because the victim is a valued bank customer or upstanding citizen, they are asked to withdraw a large amount of cash and turn it over to someone posing as a bank examiner. The phony bank officer tells the victim that a "dummy" account has been set up in their name for this transaction. The victim is assured that their account is fully insured and that they will suffer no loss due to the employee's dishonesty. The victim follows through with the plan and withdraws the agreed upon amount.

The victim meets the phony bank office in a predetermined location. The phony bank official takes the money from the victim, telling them that it actually came from the "dummy" account and not the victim's account, and that it is needed as evidence. The victim is given a receipt for the money and of course, the victim never sees the money or the con artist again.

Bank examiners would never ask to use your money in an investigation. If you receive a call or solicitation like this, you should immediately contact local law enforcement. "Bank examiner" con artists move in and out of towns quickly and are

always are on the run. These con artists are notorious for preying on the elderly or those who have recently lost a loved one.

Here are some tips on how to avoid being the victim of the bank examiner scam:

- Do not discuss finances with strangers. Do not answer any questions about your banking practices. That is personal information.
- Do not withdraw money on the advice of strangers. Beware of someone who asks to see your money, mark your money or anything else with your money; even if they claim it will be returned later.
- Immediately report to the police or your bank's security department anyone telephoning and claiming they are a bank examiner. Do not be embarrassed to talk to law enforcement officers about this as your assistance now can help stop a con artist from cashing in on other people who think they are helping stop crime.

Remember, scams like the bank examiner scam keep reappearing across the country. This scam can occur in a variety of ways, but the end result is always the same - you lose your money.

The Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division investigates allegations of fraud in the marketplace. Investigators also mediate individual complaints against businesses. If you have a consumer problem or question, call the Consumer Protection Division at 328-3404, toll-free at 1-800-472-2600, or 1-800-366-6888 (w/TTY). This article and other consumer information is located on our website at [www.ag.state.nd.us](http://www.ag.state.nd.us).

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